

Eastham Historical Commission
January 18, 2022
Eastham Library Turner Meeting Room plus Via Zoom
Meeting Minutes

Present: Jeff Bumby, J. Holden Camp Jr., Marca Daley, Marie Forjan, Mark Herman

Absent: Sylvia Sullivan

Guest: Art Autorino, Roger Thurston

1. The 1/18/22 EHC meeting was opened by Chairman J. Holden Camp Jr. at 2:10 p.m.

2. Minutes:

The minutes of the 12/21/21 EHC and OTCHDC joint meeting were moved for approval by J. Holden Camp Jr., seconded by Marie Forjan and unanimously approved as amended.

The minutes of the 12/21/21 meeting were moved for approval by J. Holden Camp Jr., seconded by Marca Daley and unanimously approved.

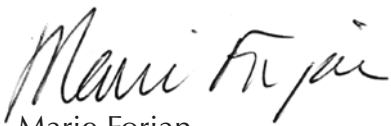
3. New business:

a. Roger Thurston, Chair of the Board of Cemetery Commissioners (BCC), reviewed what the BCC's responsibilities are. He brought handouts for Bridge Road Cemetery and Cove Burying Ground for review. He also offered to take members of the EHC on a tour of each cemetery once Spring comes. J. Holden Camp Jr. moved that the EHC absorb the responsibilities of the BCC. The motion was seconded by Marie Forjan and was unanimously approved.

b. J. Holden Camp Jr. commented on a CDC proposal for the Town of Eastham to buy the property at 580 Massasoit Road (where the COA Thrift Store is currently housed). After discussion J. Holden Camp Jr. moved that the EHC write a letter in support of the proposal, it was seconded by Marie Forjan and unanimously approved.

2. The EHC meeting was adjourned at 3:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Marie Forjan
Clerk, Eastham Historical Commission

Attachments: - *Bridge Road Cemetery Handout, Cove Burying Ground Handout*

Note: Minutes with attachments are available in a binder at the Eastham Library in the Eastham Room.

Cove Burying Ground Handout

Eastham (originally known as Nauset) was settled in 1644 by seven families from Plymouth (Bangs, Cook, Doane, Higgins, Prince, Smalley and Snow). The first meetinghouse about twenty feet square was built at or near this site in 1646. It was expanded in 1676 and served until 1720. Rev. Samuel Treat who was minister in Eastham from 1672 to his death in 1717 is buried here. The second meetinghouse built about 1718 was located in the South Precinct of Eastham (now Orleans). The third meetinghouse built about 1720 was located at Bridge Road Cemetery.

In 1976 the Eastham Historical Society published complete surveys of Eastham Cove Burying Ground and Bridge Road Cemetery done by Mr. Ken Collins. The surveys including maps of both cemeteries are in one book available for sale at Eastham Town Hall, Eastham Historical Society Museums and the Cape Cod National Seashore Eastham Visitor Center.

If you have comments or questions about these cemeteries, please contact Eastham Cemetery Commission, Eastham Town Hall, 2500 State Highway, Eastham, MA. 02642.

The web site www.capecodgravestones.com includes photos, complete inscriptions and some genealogical information for all gravestones in Cove Burying Ground and Bridge Road Cemetery. Information about some of the gravestone carvers is included. The web site also has Eastham Vital Records of deaths up to 1750 and a listing of about 80 possible unmarked graves of adults in Cove up to 1720.

Cove Burying Ground and Bridge Road Cemetery are in the National Register of Historic Places.

Please also visit historic Eastham Bridge Road Cemetery which succeeded Cove with gravestones starting in 1754.

Some Cove Gravestone Highlights:

There are monuments to three Mayflower passengers who lived and died in Eastham - Constance Hopkins Snow (1677), Joseph Rogers (1678) and Giles Hopkins (1690). Also there are monuments to early Eastham settlers Richard Sparrow (1660), John Doane (1685) and Ralph Smith (1685).

The original slate gravestones in Cove display winged skulls and winged heads. Some of these stones also display death symbols such as crossed bones or hourglass. Many of the graves have both headstone and footstone.

There are seven original gravestones older than any other gravestones on the Lower Cape from Chatham to Provincetown - Thomas Mulford (1706), Jonathan Sparrow (1706/7), Samuel Hedge (1709), Marcy Freeman (1711), Daniel Doane (1712), Samuel Freeman (1712) and Thankful Higin (1712).

Rev. Samuel Treat (1716/17) was minister in Eastham for 45 years from 1672 until his death. He is remembered as preaching hell fire and damnation. "His voice was so loud that when speaking it could be heard at a great distance from the meetinghouse, even in the midst of the winds that howled over the plains of Nauset." Rev. Treat learned the language of the Indians and preached to them with missionary zeal over a wide area of Cape Cod.

The large original slate headstone of Rev. Treat was stolen in the 1800's. It was replaced in the late 1800's with a marble headstone which was in style at the time. This marble stone is paired with the original slate footstone of Rev. Treat. A cedar tree grows over his grave. The original headstone later was found in a barn in Orleans. It was placed in Snow Library in Orleans for safe keeping where it was destroyed by fire in 1952.

Rev. Benjamin Webb followed Rev. Treat and served as minister at the Bridge Road meetinghouse from 1720 to his death in 1746. The broken slate stone near the front gate at the center of Cove marks his grave. This is the widest slate stone in Cove. It must have been a tall headstone. For information about the excavation and identification of this stone, see www.capecodgravestones.com.

Cove has the oldest original gravestone displaying a winged head on Cape Cod - Marcy Freeman (1711). She is located in the back left corner of the burying ground with her husband Major John Freeman (1719) who died in his 98th year and their son Lieut. Edmund Freeman (1718/19). Note the heart shaped inscription area, ornate border and hourglass above the winged head. Note that her footstone displays a winged skull with two sets of crossed bones.

The gravestone of Thomas Lewes (1718) displays an early winged head while the footstone has a prominent winged skull. The footstone also has two crosses which are rare on colonial gravestones. He is located to the right of center about half way back.

Cove has the two oldest known original inscribed fieldstone gravestone on Cape Cod - Benjamin Paine (1713) and Bennet Paine (1716). These and two other inscribed fieldstone gravestones for Barnabas Freeman (1736) and Marcy Freeman (1736) are located in the back right corner. The inscriptions are very difficult to read but they will show up in a good photo. Also they can be seen on www.capecodgravestones.com.

There are a few scattered fieldstones which have been excavated which probably are grave markers. Some of these stones have faint markings which some believe are initials.

Eastham Vital Records (which are incomplete) record about 160 deaths in Eastham before 1750. Most likely there are more than 100 unmarked graves in Cove.

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Bridge Road Cemetery Handout

This is the site of the third Eastham Congregational Church which was built about 1720 and served until 1830. The church probably was located near the center of the cemetery. The first Eastham meetinghouse built about 1650 was located at or near Cove Burying Ground. The second meetinghouse built about 1718 was located in the South Precinct of Eastham (now Orleans).

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Bridge Road Cemetery and Cove Burying Ground are in the National Register of Historic Places.

Please also visit historic Eastham Cove Burying Ground which preceded Bridge Road Cemetery. It has original gravestones starting in 1706 plus monuments to three Mayflower passengers and monuments to other early Eastham settlers.

Some Bridge Road Gravestone Highlights:

Bridge Road Cemetery gravestones date from Mary Freeman (1754) near the center of the cemetery in front of the large open space to Rebecca Cobb (1886) in the second row at the far right. Also there is one gravestone from the 1900's at the back of the cemetery. Bridge Road displays the transition in gravestone imagery from winged skulls and winged heads in the 1700's to urn and willow in the 1800's. Most of the gravestones are slate. A few marble and sandstone gravestones appeared in the 1800's.

Rev. Benjamin Webb served as minister at the Bridge Road meetinghouse from 1720 to his death in 1746. He is buried in Cove Burying Ground where a broken slate stone marks his grave. Rev. Edward Cheever followed Rev. Webb. Rev. Cheever served from 1751 to his death in 1794. He is buried here at Bridge Road Cemetery about six rows back and nine stones in from the left.

Rev. Philander Shaw followed Rev. Cheever. He served from 1795 to 1838 and died in 1841 at age 72. He is buried in Eastham Congregational & Soldiers Cemetery.

Dorcas Shaw (1797) in the front row was the first wife of Rev. Shaw. She died in her 19th year. Her stone is the most ornate and best preserved slate gravestone in the cemetery. Note the excellent winged head and the long inscription and epitaph. The stone probably was carved by Bildad Washburn of Kingston, MA.

Four children of Rev. Shaw with his second wife Lucy are buried near Dorcas Shaw. The children are Philander (1800), Dorcas Doane (1804), James C. (1816) and Oakes (1816). James and Oakes died in the epidemic of 1816. The location of Lucy's grave is unknown.

The small gravestone of Warren Sparrow (1812) near the left end of the second row was carved by Nathaniel Holmes (1783-1869) of Barnstable. The carved image is a distinctive winged head found on most Holmes slate gravestones. Holmes was the first recognized resident gravestone carver on Cape Cod.

Jonathan Doane (1780), a few rows behind Dorcas Shaw, displays a skull without wings and with large crossed bones. The carved image looks like a pirate flag. The gravestone is carved in the style of the Geyer carvers of Boston.

Nathaniel Atwood (1769), a few rows behind and to the right of Jonathan Doane, is a good example of a winged head portrait gravestone. It is carved in the style of William Codner of Boston.

Deacon Samuel Doane (1795) whose epitaph is on the sign in front of the cemetery can be found about ten rows back and four stones in from the left. His stone displays a winged skull. The stone has vertical and diagonal cracks.

At the far right of the cemetery Elisha Cobb (1883) is surrounded by his three wives Thankful (1828), Sophia (1833) and Rebecca (1886). His sons William Warren (1828) and Elisha Warren (1833) are included on the stones with their mothers.

The large Alexander gravestone (1993, 1971) near the back of the cemetery appeared long after the cemetery supposedly was closed to new burials. Mystery surrounds this stone.

Epidemic of 1816 - There are twenty one gravestones carrying 25 names of persons who died in 1816 mostly in February and March. An epidemic on the Lower Cape called the "cold plague" or "spotted fever" took fifty two lives in Eastham in 1816. Ashes and gases from the eruption of Mount Tambora in Indonesia in 1815 caused global cooling in 1816 which was known as the year without a summer.

Most likely there are more than one hundred unmarked graves in this cemetery.

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